

**NT 4335 - BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**  
**Austin Graduate School of Theology**  
**Fall 2018**

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**I. Course Description**

The purpose of this course in Biblical Theology is to survey major themes of the theology of the Bible. Given this stance, certain presuppositions for the course are set forth that will be of help for the student in understanding the strategy of the course and approach of the instructor.

First, a point regarding the role of biblical theology is worthy of note. Biblical theology starts with the presupposition of the existence of the church as a living community that exists to remember, perpetuate, and live by the record of God's faithfulness to his creation in the history of Israel and in the life of Jesus Christ. The Bible, the basic text for the church, is the literary deposit of the history of that record. Indeed, the Bible may be viewed as a narrative account of the unfolding story of God's revelation of himself (Salvation History). In this context, biblical theology is the systematic study of what the Bible says about the God of Israel and Jesus of Nazareth, how this God called a people, revealed himself to them, and how the people of God are to respond and live. Biblical theology is grounded in a norm: namely that the God of Abraham revealed himself decisively in the historical particularity of calling a special people culminating in the life of Jesus. It is not a defense of the dogma of a particular church. Indeed, ever since the Enlightenment, good biblical theology has often functioned as a corrective agent for some of the theologies of the institutional church.

Second, a word should be said about the role of biblical theology within the total theological spectrum. The instructor takes the position that there is a comprehensive interpretive scheme of reality embedded in the biblical materials that informed and structured the ancient church. The bedrock of this reality that informed the people of God may be called "their story"; biblical theology is simply critical reflection on that story. As George Lindbeck has said, a religion (i.e., the Christian faith) is like a language or a culture; it shapes subjectivities. Its *raison d'être* is to provide a "narrative framework" wherein the most important issues of human life are addressed and answered. This story functions as a torch that those who come later use to light other torches (members and prospective members of the Christian community) through its narration, and by participating in its institutional dimensions. It should be noted that it is the task of the pulpit minister (the most visible interpreter in the modern Christian community which remembers God's faithfulness to creation) to work out what constitutes the appropriate faith response of the believing community to God today. Usually the central medium where this comes together is the sermon. Thus the sermon should call on the resources of historical and systematic theology, church history, and above all biblical theology and exegesis in order to bring to bear the Word in an ever fresh and faithful way to the people of God today. Our task in this course is preparatory to this approach. It provides an appropriate foundation for those who must take up the awesome task of

preaching. To say this modestly, “We are simply trying to help the student get the biblical story straight.”

It should be stressed that an essential task of this course is to present an integrative understanding of the nature of the biblical story. We will look at a considerable number of biblical texts in the course; but our intent in doing this will be to highlight how particular texts function to ground important elements and doctrines of the biblical story. Every family has a story. The church has a story as well. Our controlling purpose is to understand that story thoroughly.

Finally, I would like to say a word about the textbook for this course. Usually I do not use a book I have written as a textbook for my classes. (I am capable of expressing my views on topics that the class covers and prefer that students read what others thoughtfully say about the subject matter.) But for many years in the course of teaching biblical theology I have come to some firm conclusions. I believe there is such a thing as a unified biblical story. As noted, I believe the Bible is the story of the people of God that should be read as a realistic narrative of how a gracious God made certain promises to a special people. Although often endangered, these promises are maintained, renewed, take on new dimensions, and finally at the end of the age those who live by them are vindicated. Procedurally, we will read a number of chapters of my book that will provide coherence to the course as well as others essays that are important for giving more specific information on particular issues of biblical theology.

## **II. Goals**

- A. The student will know in substantive detail the basic narrative account of the story of the people of God in the Bible as it emerges in various genres of biblical literature.
- B. The student will grasp the foundational doctrinal perspectives and commitments that are housed within the “narrative framework” of the Christian story. He or she will gain insight as to how these perspectives function as the basic building blocks for doing biblical theology.

## **III. Objectives**

- A. The student will become familiar with the broad thrusts of the major themes of biblical theology.
- B. The student will be able to take these themes and learn how to determine their proper connection with one another.
- C. The student will develop a capacity to articulate basic biblical theological concepts.

## **IV. Library Resources**

- A. 8:00-5:00 Monday-Friday; evenings Monday-Thursday (except Wed) until 10:00.
- B. APTS Library; Episcopal Seminary Library.
- C. Austin Graduate School of Theology Library provides an abundance of databases and software resources for theological study. Check with the librarian for details.

## V. Requirements

- A. Regular preparation for each class chiefly by doing the reading assignment regularly each week.
- B. This is a capstone course in the undergraduate program. Each week students will submit a one-page summary of the reading assignment on time.
- C. Two 1-1/2 hour tests over class notes and secondary readings.

## VI. Method of Evaluation

The final grade will be based upon the following:

Two Tests	25% each
Summary Assessment of one-page papers	50%

**Credit students are required to do all the summaries. If the summary assessment of the reading assignments is not handed in – or is unsatisfactory – up to a 2% deduction on the final grade will take place each time this occurs. Students are expected to get these papers in on time. Persistent late submission will incur an additional penalty.**

## VII. Textbooks

Bible -- preferably RSV or any mainstream Bible

Allan J. McNicol, *The Persistence of God's Endangered Promises: The Bible's Unified Story* (London/N.Y.: Bloomsbury T&T Clark), 2018.

(Some of the secondary reading for this course is found in material on reserve in the Austin Grad library; students are welcome to photocopy this if they please.)

## VIII. Course Outline

Week 1: Initial Meeting, Overview and Opening Lecture

### **Overview of the Biblical Narrative**

Week 2: A Unified Story

**Reading:** *Persistence of God's Endangered Promises*, 3-11; 32-45

Week 3: Israel's Story: God's Promises to a Marginalized People

**Readings:** *Persistence*, 49-74

Week 4: The Good News of Jesus: Restoration for Israel is at Hand

**Reading:** *Persistence*, 77-96

Week 5: Matthew: The Transforming Word Goes Forth to Israel

**Reading:** *Persistence*, 97-117

Week 6: The Pauline Orbit: To The Gentiles

**Reading:** *Persistence*, 118-138

Week 7: **Test 1: October 10**

Week 8: Luke-Acts: In Defense of the Unification of Jew and Gentile as the People of God

**Reading:** *Persistence*, 139-157

Week 9: The Biblical Basis for the Persistence of God's Promises

**Reading:** N. Dahl, "The Story of God's Endangered Promises," in *Word and World* 3/3, 258-262

### **What the Story Means to Me**

Week 10: The Human in the First and New Creation

**Readings:** Patrick D. Miller, "What is a Human Being? The Anthropology of Scripture," in *What About the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology*, 63-73

Week 11: Life and the Battle / Defeat of Death in the Bible

**Reading:** N. T. Wright, *New Heavens, New Earth: The Biblical Picture of Christian Hope*, 3-24

Week 12: The Johannine Vision of God's Triumph

**Readings:** *Persistence*, 186-203

Week 13: Thanksgiving Week (Nov. 21)

No Class

Week 14: Normed by Scripture: The Gospel We Preach

**Reading:** *Persistence*, 174-185; 207-212

Week 15: **Test 2 – December 5**

### **IX. Bibliography - Works appropriate for Book Review (Austin Grad Library call number)**

Barr, James. *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An OT Perspective*. London: SCM, 1999.

Beale, G. K. *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Transformation of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997. (BS 1192.5 .B79 1997)

Caird, G. B. *New Testament Theology*. Oxford University Press, 1994. (BS 2397 .C35 1994)

- Childs, Brevard S. *Old Testament Theology in Canonical Context*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. (BS 1192.5 .C38)
- Childs, Brevard S. *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993. (BS 543 .C453 1993)
- Dahl, Nils Alstrup. *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. (BT 198 .D25 1991)
- Dunn, James D. G. *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977. (BS 2397 .D85)
- Dyrness, William A. *Themes in Old Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1979. (BS 1192.5 .D9)
- Gese, Hartmut. *Essays on Biblical Theology*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981. (BS 543 .G4813 1981)
- Gloer, Hulitt (ed.). *Eschatology in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of George Raymond Beasley-Murray*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988. (BS 2545 .E7 .E87 1988)
- Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Hafemann, Scott J. (ed.). *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002. (BS 543 .B524 2002)
- Hanson, Paul D. *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. (BS 635.2 .H36)
- Hooker, Morna D. *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995. (BT 453 .H76 1995)
- Ladd, George E. *A Theology of the New Testament* (revised edition). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993. (BS 2397 .L33 1993)
- Levenson, Jon. *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. (BS 1192.5 .L48 1985)
- Lohfink, Gerhard. *Jesus of Nazareth*. Collegeville, Minn.; Liturgical Press, 2012.
- Marshall, I. H. *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004. (BS 2397 .M37 2004)

- McNicol, A. J. *The Persistence of God's Endangered Promises: The Bible's Unified Story*. London/NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018.
- Morris, Leon. *New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1986. (BS 2397 .M64)
- Peterson, David (ed.). *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet: Proclaiming the Atonement Today*. Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2002. (BT 265.3 .W49 2001)
- Reventlow, Henning Graf. *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. (BS 543 .R48)
- Richardson, Alan. *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*. New York: Harper & Row, 1958. (BS 2397 .R48)
- Scobie, C. H. H. *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003. (BS 543 .S39 2002)
- Stagg, Frank. *New Testament Theology*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1962. (BS 2397 .S72)
- Stuhlmacher, Peter. *Reconciliation, Law and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. (BS 2397 .S88)
- Terrien, Samuel L. *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978. (BS 543 .T37)
- Thielman, F. *Theology of the New Testament*. Zondervan, 2005. (BS 2397 .T445 2005)
- Watson, Francis. *Text, Church, and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1994. (BS 476 .W367 1994)
- Watson, Francis. *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997. (BS 476 .W37 1997)
- Watson, Francis. *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentile: Beyond the New Perspective*. Grand Rapids. Eerdmans, 2007. (BS 2655 .J4 W38 2007)
- Wright, Christopher J.H. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2006. (BV 2063 .W74 2006)
- Zimmerli, Walter. *Old Testament Theology in Outline*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978. (BS 1192.5 .Z5513 1978)